

## PARTICULAR MONUMENTS AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL MATERIALS FROM THE DOBRUJAN CULTURAL HERITAGE

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**Abstract:** *The archaeological research that we have made as site scientific manager or as member in various research collectives, in the ancient cities of Tomis, Callatis, Sucidava, Sucidava and in other archaeological sites in Constanța County, have had as a result the discovery of many monuments and archaeological materials, remarkably important for the history of the land between the Danube River and the Black Sea and for our national history. Some of these we have presented, in September 2023, at the National Scientific Fall Conference of the Academy of Romanian Scientists.<sup>1</sup>*

*Among the more important archaeological discoveries from the Mangalia city area, from the city of Callatis and its necropolises, we mention: the frieze with representations of deities, the inscription in honour of Emperor Augustus, two complete Ionic capitals, walls of Roman houses, pavements, water wells, ceramic vessels, gold jewellery, coins etc. On the occasion of archaeological research made in the western part of the city of Mangalia, in the neolithic settlement belonging to the Hamangia culture, we have uncovered: houses, subterranean habitations (bordăie), hearths, workshops, tools, ceramic vessels, and idols. In the ancient city of Tomis, in the immediate proximity of the Roman Mosaic Building, we have discovered: the precinct wall of the Hellenistic city, walls from Roman era houses, and many Hellenistic and Roman ceramic fragments. And also in the city of Tomis, on the present day Archiepiscopate Street, (str. Archiepiscopiei), we have discovered walls dating from the Roman era, Roman and Hellenistic ceramic fragments, an amphora preserved in its entirety, ceramic vessels, oil lamps, coins from the Roman period, and several architectural elements, among which an absolutely remarkable Christian capital.*

*During the research that we have coordinated in the Roman-Byzantine city of Sucidava, in the 2019–2022 archaeological campaigns, we have brought to the surface: house walls, pavements, architectural elements, coins, ceramic fragments, osteological fragments, iron objects etc. Recently we have also concluded the first systematic archaeological research in the Roman-Byzantine city of Sucidava Moesica, research that we have led as site scientific manager.*

*Also, along with Dr Ion Pâslaru, following research spanning the years 2009 to 2011, done in the museums and storage rooms of the institutes for the restoration and conservation of cultural goods in Moscow, we have retrieved the only ancient papyrus discovered on the territory of Romania, a papyrus lost for more than half a century in the capital of the Russian Federation. In august 2011, we have succeeded in bringing this*

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<sup>1</sup>Sorin Marcel Colesniuc, *Descoperiri arheologice de excepție care au îmbogățit patrimoniul cultural dobrogean*, scientific report presented at the National Scientific Fall Conference of the Academy of Romanian Scientists "Science for a healthy society" („Știința pentru o societate sănătoasă”), Constanța, September 21–23, 2023.

*document back to the country, of remarkable importance for the history of Dobruja and for the national history of Romanians.*

*In the following, we shall present the most important monuments and archaeological materials that we have discovered, over a quarter of a century of research, in ancient cities and various archaeological sites found in the lands between the Danube and the Black Sea.*

**Keywords:** Tomis, Callatis, Sacidava, Sucidava, Hamangia, Hellenistic precinct wall, frieze, capital, inscription, papyrus, archaeological research.

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### **FRIEZE WITH REPRESENTATIONS OF DEITIES, CALLATIS**

The rescue archaeological research, made on the occasion of an edifice being built on 18, Oituz Street, Mangalia, in spring 2005, has led to the discovery of many archaeological materials that have been dated to the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Our research has unfolded in the Hellenistic neighbourhood in the extramural area of Callatis City. The terrain had been affected by the research made in the 1980s, but not down to the ancient treading level.

On this occasion, we have discovered: several Hellenistic houses, pavements, a small plaza, three wells, cesspits, processed lithic fragments, bronze and iron objects, many fragments from ceramic vessels, amphorae, "Tanagra"-type ceramic statuettes, and others. Among these archaeological materials, of a remarkable importance is a fragment from a marble frieze on which there are sculpted four deities, such artifacts being extremely rare in Dobruja.<sup>2</sup>



*Fig. 1, 2 – Archaeological research on 18, Oituz Street, Mangalia*

<sup>2</sup> Ion Păslaru, Sorin Marcel Colesniuc, *O friză cu reprezentări de divinități descoperită la Callatis*, in *Pontica XXXVII – XXXVIII*, 2004 – 2005, Muzeul de Istorie Națională și Arheologie Constanța, pp. 413–418.

Alongside the frieze with deities there also appeared: a column base, processed lithic fragments, and many Hellenistic ceramic fragments. The dimensions of the frieze are the following: length of 56 cm, height of 42 cm, and width of 12 cm. Three of the deities sculpted on the frieze are represented standing and one sitting. The characters in the centre are facing each other and talking, and the ones on the sides (a female character on the left and a male one on the right) also participate in the conversation.<sup>3</sup>

On the left side of the frieze is Athena, goddess of wisdom, represented along with her attributes: the spear, the shield, and the helmet. The next character is Aphrodite, goddess of love and beauty. She is represented turning around towards the next character, talking. With her right hand she holds the hand of her interlocutor, and her left hand is raised. The third deity is Hera, goddess of marriage, of the hearth, and of married women, sister and wife of Zeus, queen of gods and men. Hera is sitting on an ovoid stone, and in her left hand she holds a spear.



*Fig. 3, 4 – Frieze with representations of deities*

The last character is a god, standing, with his chest revealed, who we have identified as Poseidon, master of the sea, brother of Zeus and Hera. His representation on the frieze resembles the statue of Poseidon from Melos Island.

The frieze that we have discovered, in Callatis, can be dated to the 3<sup>rd</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BC. It was a fragment from a Hellenistic building, after which, in the Roman period, it was shattered and repurposed in a different building. The faces of the deities have been intentionally destroyed.

<sup>3</sup> Ion Păslaru, Sorin Marcel Colesniuc, Mihai Ionescu, *Cercetări în cartierul elenistic din zona extramuros a cetății Callatis*, in Ion Păslaru, Sorin Marcel Colesniuc, Todor Dimov, *Callatis*, Editura Callas Print, Mangalia, 2014, pp. 125–146.



This frieze with representations of deities is the only such frieze discovered in Callatis and has been exhibited in the permanent exhibition of the *Callatis* Museum of Archaeology in Mangalia. In the museums in Constanța, only one frieze, similar to this one, can still be seen in the Histria Museum.

### INSCRIPTION HONOURING EMPEROR AUGUSTUS

Following some heavy rains that fell over Dobruja, on the island south-east of Mangalia City, in the immediate proximity of the beach, buried at a shallow depth, there appeared a fragment from a marble block on which there was an inscription. We have concluded that this architectural fragment was in the earth stratum brought from the area of Mangalia City during the intensive residential construction from the 1950s and 1960s. The marble block, of a medium size, represents a fragment from an architectural detail – an architrave or a cornice – with the rest of the external plate of the entablature, originating from a building of public interest.<sup>4</sup> The length of the block is 120 cm, the width 53 cm, and the height 20 cm. The total length, reconstituted, could be of around 170–172 cm. The upper surface of the frontal side, with a width of 4 cm, preserves the traces of the thorough work of its sculptor, while the other surface is less smooth and more roughly worked.



*Fig. 5, 6 – Inscription honouring Emperor Augustus*

<sup>4</sup> Ion Păslaru, Sorin Marcel Colesniuc, *O nouă inscripție din Callatis în onoarea împăratului Augustus*, in Ion Păslaru, Sorin Marcel Colesniuc, Todor Dimov, *Callatis*, Editura Callas Print, Mangalia, 2014, pp. 39–50.

The fragment is deteriorated on all sides. Its upper part is strongly chiselled, and the deepest cleavage can be observed on the left side of the slab. This cleavage sectioned the architrave, after it little less than half of the length of the architectural piece being preserved.

On the right side there have remained visible the remains of the external part of the architrave, the frieze of which is well-smoothened. On this there can be very clearly read the Greek letters carved on two rows, from which only the right half has been preserved. The height of the letters is of 38–40 mm, the width of 35–40 mm, and the distance between the letters is between 5 and 10 mm.

At a distance of 16 cm from the edge, on the back of the slab, at its centre, there exists a hollow of 3.5x3.5 cm, with a depth of 3.5 cm and with traces of lead, by way of which, obviously, this slab was connected to another slab from a portico or from the façade of a building. The marble is white. Its quality is not very good and there are no chipping flakes.

The text of the Greek inscription is as follows: "The people (of Kallatis City...) have dedicated the gymnasium to Caesar Augustus". The inscription is written in the Doric dialect, typical for Callatis, a colony of Heraclea Pontica. The inscription can be dated to the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC or the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.

To support this dating we have, firstly, the content of the inscription, and, more precisely, the mention of Emperor Augustus (30–14 BC). The palaeographic indicators do not contradict this conclusion: the contour lines of the letters are broad, especially for the letters sigma, omicron, omega, alpha, mu, the broken transversal stroke of the alpha, the parallel strokes of the sigma. Generally, the font of the inscription is related to the single epigraphic document from Callatis, mentioning the autocrat Caesar Augustus: "To Emperor Caesar Augustus the people (dedicated) the columns of the portico", years 3/2 BC–14 AC.

According to the opinion of Alexandru Avram, this inscription was made during the life of the emperor, towards the end of his reign. The inscription indicates that the citizens of Callatis, following the decision of the Popular Assembly, had built (or rebuilt) a gymnasium, that was dedicated to Caesar Augustus.

However, the last letter of the word ("N"), from the missing part of the inscription, and the connector *καί*, shows that along with the gymnasium another edifice had been built or repaired, that was dedicated to the Roman emperor. In the age of the Empire, in several cities from the Eastern provinces, there were built gymnasia, stoaes, exedras, various porticoes and colonnades. They were built by gymnasiarchs and other rich citizens, witnesses being the inscriptions on the architraves.

### THE IONIC CAPITALS FROM CALLATIS

At the end of 2015 rehabilitation works of the Linden Alley (*Aleea Teilor*) in Mangalia were carried out. On this occasion, we have made a preventive archaeological survey during which we have discovered: numerous ceramic fragments, two fulling vat fragments (*pivă*), various small architectural fragments, and an ancient fountain in the lining of which there was embedded a funerary stele.



*Fig. 7, 8 – Rehabilitation works of the Linden Alley in Mangalia*

However, the most important archaeological materials that we have discovered, on the occasion of these rehabilitation works, are two complete Ionic capitals, made of limestone.<sup>5</sup> The first capital was discovered at the end of October 2015. It is a Ionic capital, decorated with volutes, leaves, and egg-and-dart. The capital appeared on the seashore, on the eastern side of the Linden Alley, at a depth of approximately 1 meter, on the eastern side of the city of Callatis.

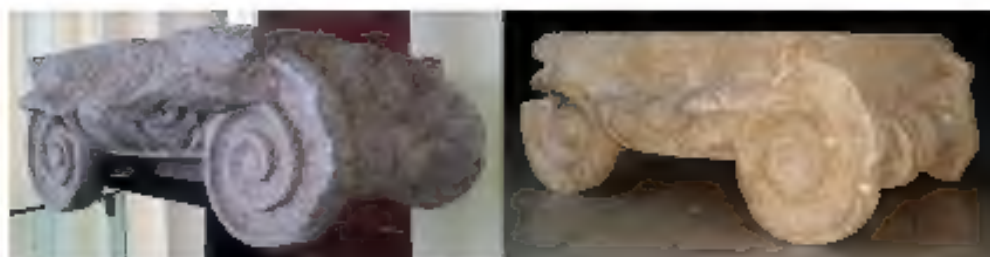
After nearly a month, in November 2015, we have discovered the second Ionic capital, found on the western side of Linden Alley, 12 m away from the location of the first capital. The second one appeared due to a ditch being excavated, for the insertion of an electrical network, a ditch only 30 cm wide and 70 cm deep.

The second capital is made, like the first, from a fine limestone, has the same dimensions as the first and is also decorated with volutes, leaves, and egg-and-dart, identical to the ones sculpted on the first capital. The dimensions of the two capitals are the following: length 50 cm, width 42 cm, height 18 cm. We are certain that both architectural elements have been parts of the architecture of the same ancient building, possibly a temple, since they have

<sup>5</sup> Sorin Marcel Colesniuc, *Cercetări arheologice preventive la Callatis*, scientific report delivered at the National Session of Archaeological Reports, Târgu Jiu, May 25–28, 2016.



been found in the highest place of the city of Callatis, the area in which, usually, temples were erected in Antiquity.



*Fig. 9, 10 – The Ionic capitals discovered on Linden Alley, Mangalia*

The similar dimensions, the technique employed, and the fine limestone from which the capitals were made, render us to conclude that the artisan (the stonemason) was one and the same person. If the first capital appeared on the eastern side of Linden Alley, right in the area where the slope towards the Black Sea begins, the second capital was found on the western side of Linden Alley.

We stress the fact that both capitals have been discovered in the filling layer and not in archaeological complexes. The terrain has been affected by the continuous habitation from the last two millennia. The ground was especially upset during the last century, proof being the many ditches for the introduction of networks: water, sewage, and electricity.

Both capitals have been exhibited in the permanent exhibition of the *Callatis* Museum of Archaeology in Mangalia. These architectural elements are among the most important archaeological materials that we have discovered, in the city of Callatis area, on the occasion of preventive archaeological research. We mention that, from more than 100 years of archaeological research in Mangalia, the *Callatis* museum had in its collection only eight complete capitals, and, with these two, their number rose to ten.

#### **ARCHEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES IN THE NEOLITHIC SETTLEMENT OF HAMANGIA**

In 2006, there began the construction works for a residential neighbourhood in the western part of Mangalia. The preventive archaeological research that we have made in the Dobrogea I neighbourhood, has led to the discovery of several important archaeological materials (ceramic vessels and fragments, sillex and stone tools, osteological fragments etc.), houses,

subterranean habitations, hearths, and workshops, all part of the Hamangia Neolithic culture.<sup>6</sup>



*Fig. 11, 12 – Archaeological material discovered in the Hamangia Neolithic settlement*

Among these important archaeological discoveries there also are two representations of the Neolithic anthropomorphic shape: a miniature female statuette made of bone, of small dimensions 2.00x0.80 cm, which resembles a statuette discovered in the Durankulak necropolis and a clay idol, in fragmentary state, discovered in Mangalia. The bone statuette belongs to type A and represents a female figure represented “standing”.

The second anthropomorphic representation is a burnt clay idol, that shows a new shape variety of the stylised form where there is, however, present a particular element of the Hamangia culture: the head represented as a tall column. The idol resembles the C-type statuette discovered in the Cernavodă necropolis.

<sup>6</sup> Ion Păslaru, Sorin Marcel Colesniuc, *Așezarea fazet târzie a culturii Hamangia la Mangalia*, scientific report delivered on October 4, 2006, at the Constanța History and Archaeology Museum, on the occasion of the 39<sup>th</sup> scientific session, Caransebeș, November 17, 2006, on the occasion of the *Constantin Daicoviciu, Hadrian Daicoviciu, Marian Gumă – In Memoriam* International Symposium, 32<sup>nd</sup> edition; Idem, *Noi cercetări arheologice în punctul Dobrogea I – Mangalia*, report delivered on October 3, 2007, at the Constanța History and Archaeology Museum, on the occasion of the 40<sup>th</sup> scientific session *PONTICA 2007*; Idem, *Cercetările așezării culturii Hamangia din Mangalia*, report delivered at Tulcea, on May 30, 2007, at the 41<sup>st</sup> National Session of Archaeological Reports.





*Fig. 13, 14 – The bone statuette and the ceramic idol*

Our conclusions, resulting from archaeological research in the Mangalia area, are that around the modern city there exist at least three Neolithic settlements belonging to the Hamangia culture.<sup>7</sup> Future research will define the relationships of the Hamangia culture with its other synchronous cultures.

#### **A FRAGMENT FROM THE HELLENISTIC PRECINCT WALL DISCOVERED NEAR THE ROMAN MOSAIC BUILDING**

Following the start of the project called “The consolidation, conservation, restoration, protection, setting up, and highlight of the Roman Mosaic Building” and in order to reduce the humidity level that affects the monument, in the mentioned project there was proposed a draining system for the rainwater, which will be set on the northern side of the edifice, behind the ancient masonry wall. Thus, at the beginning of 2023, the preventive archaeological research was developed on the entire northern side of the monument, totalling 110 m<sup>2</sup> and being organised in two distinct sections, corresponding to the needs of the investigation.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Ion Păslaru, Sorin Marcel Colesniuc, *Noi date despre aşezarea culturii Hamangia din zona Mangaliei*, în *Materiale şi Cercetări Arheologice*, Year 2008, No. 3, pp. 65–81.

<sup>8</sup> Sorin Marcel Colesniuc, Tiberiu Potârniche, Petrică Colţeanu, *Cercetări arheologice recente în proximitatea Edificiului Roman cu Mozaic*, în Sorin Marcel Colesniuc, Gabriel Mirecea Talmaţchi, Lavinia Dumitraşeu, Cristina Talmaţchi, Mariana Cojoc, Costin Scurtu, *Constanţa – Istorie, Vecinătate, Multiculturalitate*, Editura MEGA, Cluj-Napoca, 2023, pp. 113–132.

During the archaeological research there have been identified three masonry structures originating from ancient buildings, as well as nine complexes, eight of which are ancient (datable to the Hellenistic and Roman periods) and one contemporaneous.

The archaeological material that was discovered is rich and representative both for the documented eras and for the importance of the edifice throughout its existence. Following the research there have been recovered ceramic vessels and objects, complete or fragmented, numismatic pieces, construction elements, glass and metal objects. On the occasion of this research there was obtained new information regarding the relief from Antiquity, a situation that was maintained through building the Roman Mosaic Building nearly until these days.

There have been discovered a series of complexes datable to Antiquity, mainly to the Hellenistic era. The archaeological research has revealed that the southern cliffs of the Tomis peninsula fall abruptly toward the sea level, and in the high plateau area there existed a type of fortification that followed the natural lines of the peninsula.

The most important of all discoveries is complex C8, partially researched on the position of the future water tank. The fact that the ceramic material discovered is exclusively Hellenistic supports the theory that we are in the perimeter of the first fortification of Tomis, that has remained conserved for a long time.

Wall no. 3 is a large wall, made of ashlar blocks bound with earth, with an east-west orientation, that is preserved on a length of 8.80 m and continues, probably, towards the west. The width is variable, between 1.40 m and 2.20 m. Towards the West it is partially superposed by the protective building of the Roman Mosaic Building, being affected by its setup.



*Fig. 15 – Precinct wall of the Hellenistic city of Tomis*

The binding agent used is yellow clay, however, most of the wall has a ruined aspect, presenting voids and intrusions. The number of preserved courses is variable, between 6 (east) and 13 (west). In the 1970s, the wall was

affected by the placement of a pipe that served for the evacuation of rainwater from the roof of the protective structure of the Roman Mosaic Building.

During the archaeological research we have dismantled some of the fallen stones, attempting to find the façade of the wall. Ultimately, we have stopped this endeavour, since we have observed that the stones enter under the building of the edifice and it is possible that the eventual wall facing is placed in an area inaccessible these days. Towards the east there can be remarked a corner made of chiselled ashlar, of large sizes, neatly organised. The material recovered from the voids and the earth used as binding agent are Hellenistic. The complex was outlined at depths of 0.50 m and 0.90 m and is present until the depth of 3.00 m. On the southern side, another modern anthropic intervention, a concrete pipe also present in the photographs taken during the research on the Roman Mosaic Building, has sectioned a part of the complex. In that which regards the dating, we can consider, hypothetically, that this corresponds to the Hellenistic period, in the absence of a binding agent such as mortar, but also any other *spolia*-type elements, common in subsequent buildings.

#### THE CHRISTIAN CAPITAL IN TOMIS CITY

In September-December 2023, we ran a preventive archaeological research in the old city of Tomis, at present day 13, Archiepiscopate Street (*str. Archiepiscopiei*). The researched site had been affected by the successive building, in the modern period, of three houses with cellars with depths up to 4.00 m, that had affected the archaeological layers. However, at the southern side of the researched site we have discovered stone and mortar walls, which we have dated to the Roman period.



Fig. 16-17 Archaeological site, Archiepiscopate Street, Constanta City



Also, we have discovered many ceramic fragments, ceramic vessels, a complete amphora, architectural fragments, one complete fueling vat and another in pieces, of limestone, bronze coins, and others. Among these we have also found a particular Christian capital, unique in Dobruja.<sup>9</sup>

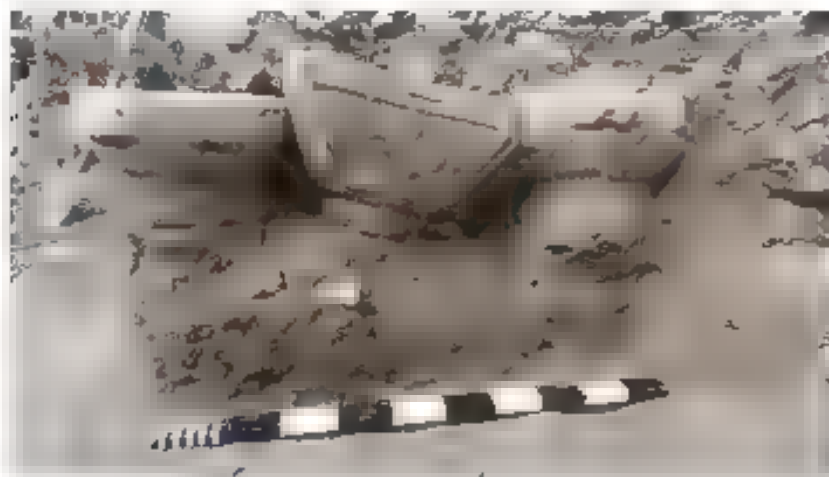
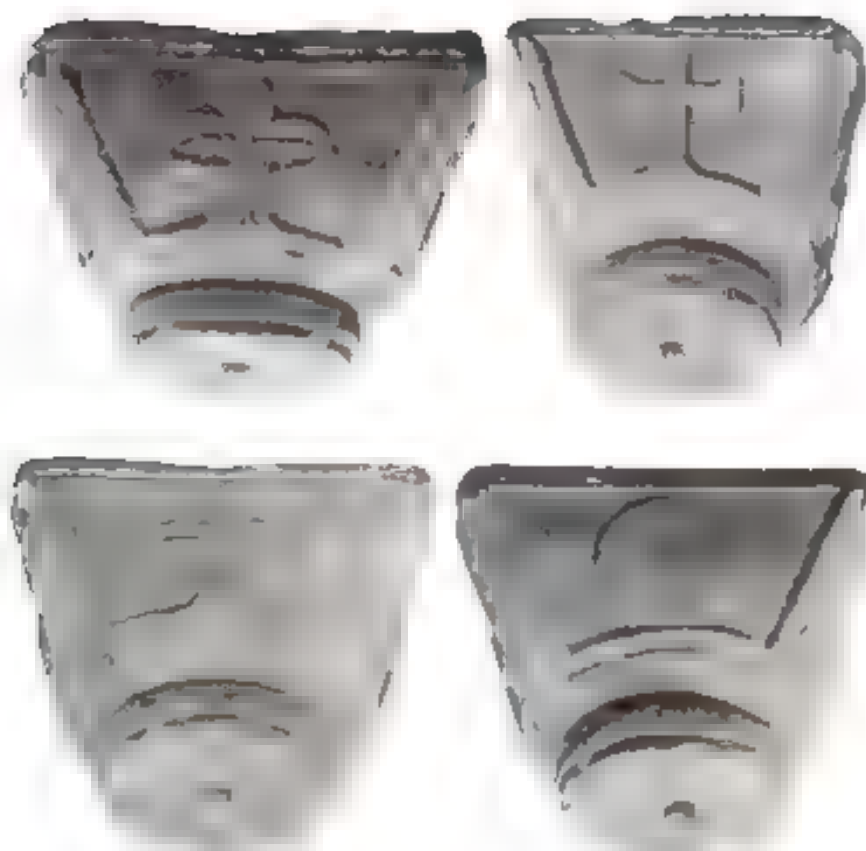


Fig. 18 The Christian capital framed by two column bases

The capital appeared at the northern end of section S2, at the depth of one meter, between two column bases reused, most likely, as steps for the access to the cellars of one of the buildings from the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>9</sup> Sorin Marcel Colesnuc, *Materiale arheologice deosebite, datate în perioadele greacă și romană, recent descoperite la Constanța*, Scientific report delivered at the comunicare științifică susținută la Național Scientific Spring Conference of the Academy of Romanian Scientists (AOSR), May 24–25, 2024, Bucharest, idem, *O nouă cercetare arheologică în cetatea Tomis*, scientific report delivered at the National Session of Archaeological Reports, 58<sup>th</sup> Edition, May 29–31, 2024, Târgu Mureș, Idem, *Elemente arhitectonice anice recent descoperite în cetățile de la malul Mării Negre*, scientific report delivered at the National Congress of Romanian Historians, Chișinău–Suceava, August 27–31, 2024.



*Fig 19 20, 21, 22 The Christian capital from the city of Tomis*

The capital is made of marble and has the following dimensions: upper sides 43x43 cm, lower diameter 22.5 cm, height 30 cm, clamping hole 3x3 cm. Width of the registers is 32.34 cm wider side and 17.18 cm narrower side and the height of the register is 15 cm. Size of the two trefoil crosses is 15x15 cm, of the Byzantine cross 14x14 cm, and diameter of the relief circle (representation of the Sun or the Moon) is 15 cm.

## THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN ROMAN SACIDAVA

The research in Roman Sacidava began in 1969 and has developed, with interruptions, until 1980.<sup>10</sup> In 2014–2016 there were made several minor interventions, and from autumn 2019 the systematic archaeological research was resumed under site scientific manager Dr Sorin Marcel Colesnuc, expert in archaeology. The systematic archaeological research then continued in the years 2020, 2021, and 2022.<sup>11</sup>

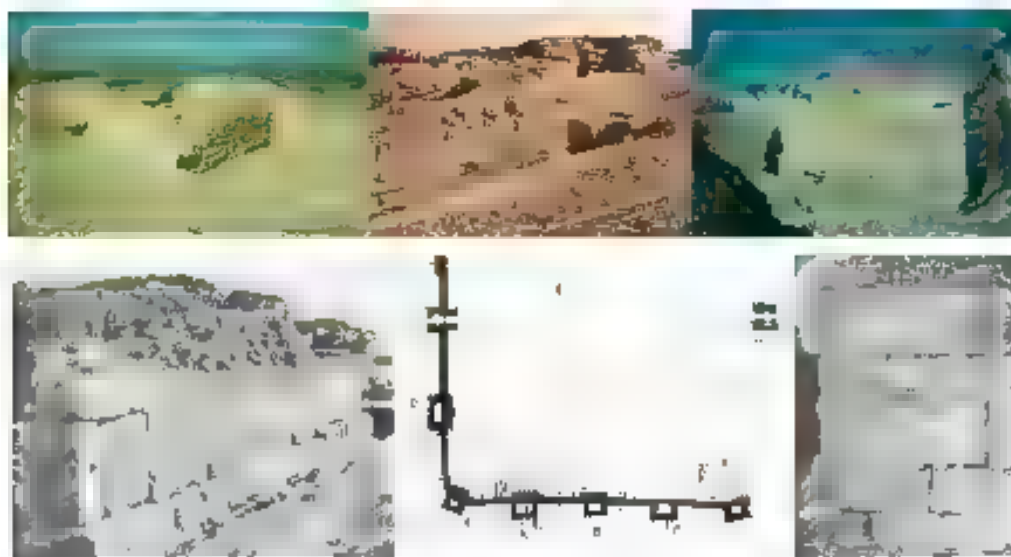


Fig. 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 Sacidava in the 1970s after C. Scorpan

<sup>10</sup> C. Scorpan, *Limes Scythiae. Topographical and stratigraphical research on the late Roman fortifications on the Lower Danube* (BAR, International Series 88, Oxford, England, 1980), pp. 40–75.

<sup>11</sup> T. Clante, *Sacidava, com. Aliman, jud. Constanța, Punct. Dealul Muzalt*, in *Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România. Campania 2014. A XLIX-a Sesiune Națională de Rapoarte Arheologice*, Pitești: Muzeul Județean Argeș, 28–30 mai 2015, Institutul Național al Patrimoniului, 2017, pp. 125–126; T. Clante, A. Mototolea, *Dunăreni com. Aliman, jud. Constanța Punct. Sacidava*, in *Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România. Campania 2016. A II-a Sesiune Națională de Rapoarte Arheologice*, București: Muzeul Național de Istorie a României, 24–27 mai 2017, Institutul Național al Patrimoniului, 2017, pp. 35–56; S.M. Colesnuc, T. Clante, T. Potârniche, A. Mototolea, *Dunăreni com. Aliman, jud. Constanța Punct. Sacidava*, in *Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România. Campania 2019. A LIV-a Sesiune Națională de Rapoarte Arheologice*, Muzeul Județean Buzău, 25–27 noiembrie 2020, Institutul Național al Patrimoniului, Muzeul Județean Buzău, 2020, pp. 28–130; S.M. Colesnuc, T. Potârniche, A. Mototolea, T. Clante, S.M. Stancu, *Intramuros archaeological research at Sacidava. Preliminary information*, in ed. Ș. Forșiu, coord. D. Miclea, *ArheoVest, Nr. VIII. În Onoarea Alexandru Rădulescu. Interdisciplinaritate în Arheologie și Istorie* (Szeged-Timișoara, 2020), pp. 375–384; S.M. Colesnuc, T. Clante, T. Potârniche, A. Mototolea, S. Stancu, *Dunăreni com. Aliman, jud. Constanța punct. Dealul Muzalt*, in *Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România. Campania 2020. A LV-a Sesiune Națională de Rapoarte Arheologice*, Universitatea Lucian Blaga, Sibiu, 2021, pp. 84–85.



In the 2019 archaeological campaign we have researched nine archaeological complexes dated to the 6<sup>th</sup> century: two late Roman houses, a pit for the production of construction binder, a segment of road, the walls of a large building, and a canal made of stone and fire resistant mortar. In 2020 we have researched the flooring of the house made from tegular materials and yellow clay, a medieval house, the remains of a Roman flooring on which there were found fragments of globular amphorae, decorated with wavy indentations and late, thick walled amphorae decorated with grooves.

In the 2021 and 2022 archaeological campaigns we have continued the research in sections S3, S4, and S5, which we have traced perpendicular to section S1, with the purpose of identifying the eastern side of the precinct wall of the fortification. We did not identify this defence wall, however we have researched three other house walls. Section S5 intersected with the old dig, at the Eastern Gate, made by C. Scorpan in the 1970s. Among the archaeological materials discovered are: ceramic fragments, osteologic fragments, iron nails, and coins.

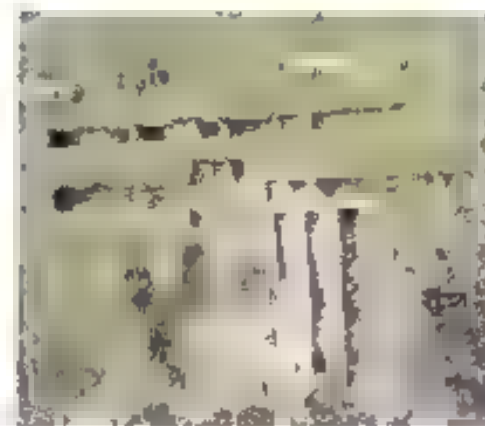


Fig. 29, 30 The archaeological research in Sacidava in 2021–2022

In September 2020, as part of the *Living Danube Limes* program Ludwig Boltzmann Institute, there were investigated the following archaeological structures through magnetic prospects: the Roman fortification, the Roman settlement, the Getic dava, and the early medieval settlement. The geophysical explorations were made on the following surfaces: the Roman fortification (0.95 ha), the Roman settlement south of the Roman fortification (1.67 ha), the Getic dava (0.34 ha) and the early medieval settlement (0.66 ha) with a total area of 3.62 ha being prospected.

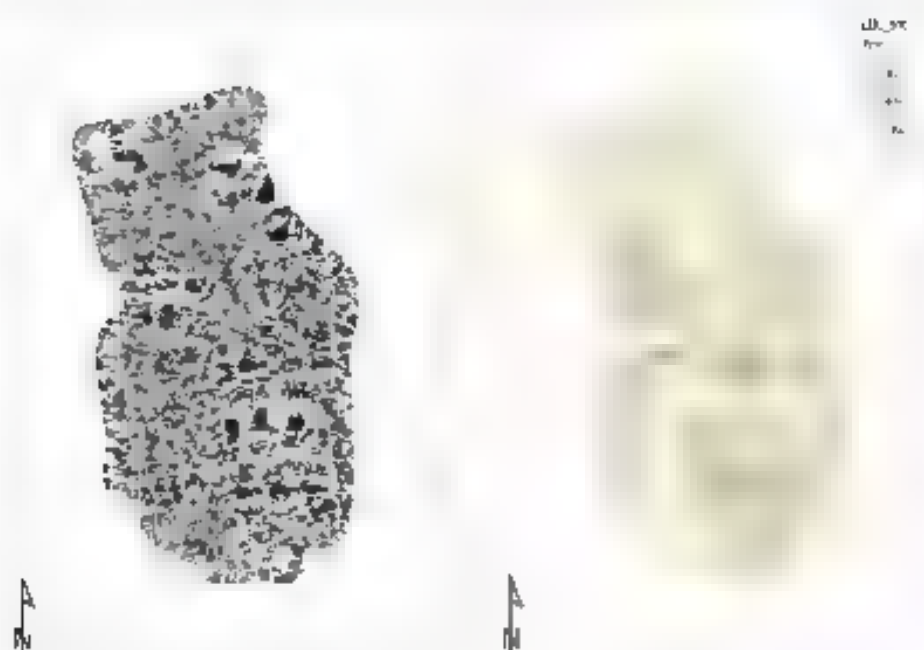


Fig. 31 Explorations in the Roman fortification 0.95 ha

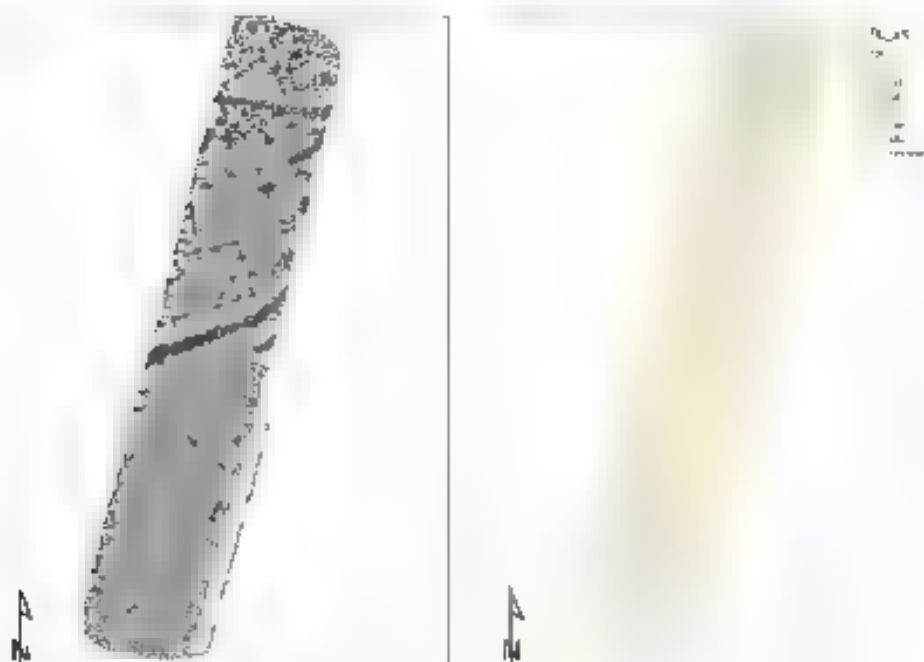
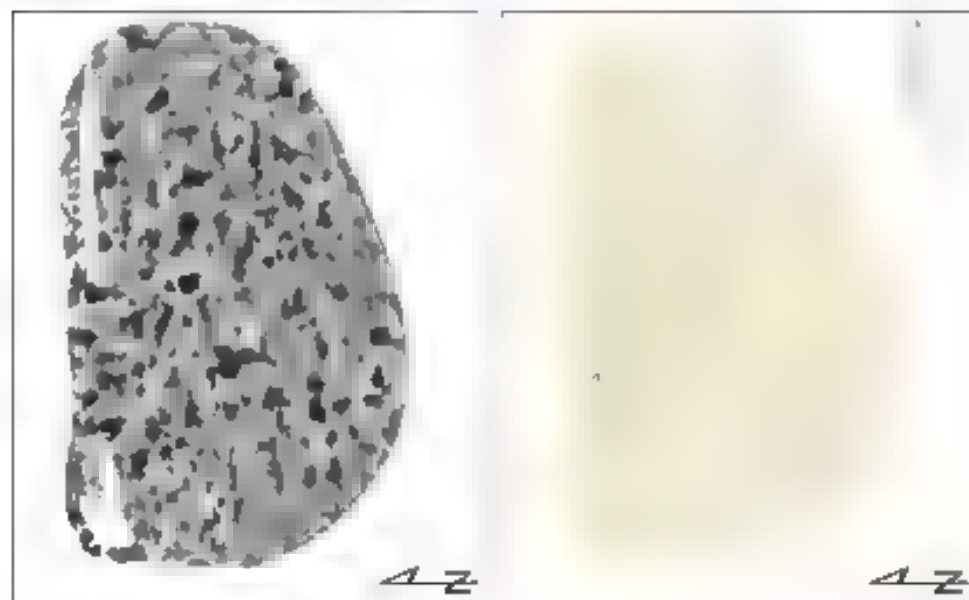
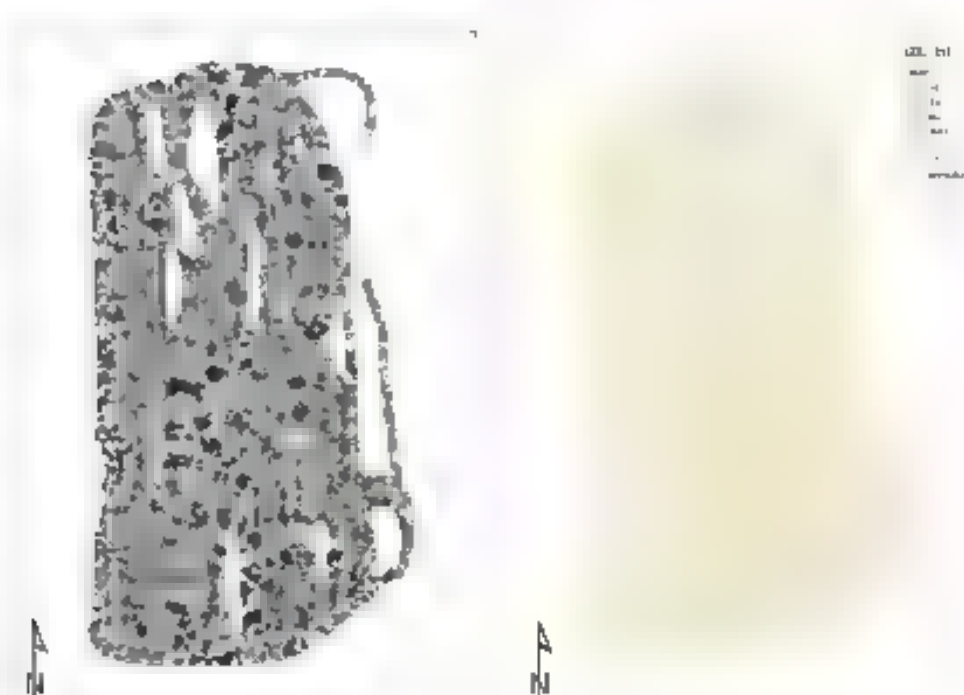


Fig. 32 Explorations in the Roman settlement 1.67 ha



*Fig. 33 Explorations in the Getic dava 0.34 ha*



*Fig. 34 Explorations in the medieval settlement 0.66 ha*



The analysis and data visualisation were made by using algorithms and a special processing software. The average distance of the samples was of 10-15 cm, at a moving speed of 18-27 km/h. The results are remarkably encouraging for us, magnetic exploration offering the best results.<sup>2</sup> There have been highlighted rectangular building structures, walls, tombs, pits, trenches, hearths, furnaces, access ways etc., therefore any future systematic archaeological research will be considering the results of the magnetic prospects done by the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute.

### THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH AT SUCIDAVA MOESICA

In October 2024 we have commenced systematic archaeological research in the Roman-Byzantine city of Sucidava Moesica, found on the right banks of the Danube, three km downstream from Izvoarele Pârjoaia Village and approximately 25 km, on the course of the Danube, upstream from Sacidava. It is important to mention that, if in other ancient cities from Constanța County such as Histria, Tomis, Callatis, Adamclisi, Capidava, and others, archaeologists have been systematically researching for over 100 years, for the city of Sucidava Moesica this is the first systematic archaeological research.

Sucidava is known from several historical sources from Antiquity. *Itinerarium Antonini* records the settlements along the Danube that were part of the Roman military defensive system and notes that the city of Sucidava was between Durostorum and Axiopolis. *Tabula Peutingeriana* locates Sagadava and Sucidava between Durostorum and Axiopolis, Sagadava being 27 km away from Durostorum. In *Notitia Dignitatum* there is no mention of Sucidava or Sagadava in Scythia Minor, but only Sacidava. Ptolemy, in *Geographike Hyphegesis*, locates Sucidava between Durostorum and Axiopolis.

As a working hypothesis, archaeologist Petre Diaconu places the city of Dafne in Pârjoaia. He is of the opinion that Emperor Constantine the Great had replaced the name of the old city of Sucidava with Dafne. To this end Procopius of Caesarea recalls, in his work *De Aedificiis*, the city of Dafne. Ammianus Marcellinus, in his work *Bellum Gothicum*, mentions that Roman Emperor Flavius Valens had reached Dafne in 367, after which he crossed the Danube in his fight against the Goths. In *Notitia Dignitatum* there are noted the comitatenses troops: *constantini dafnenses* and *balistanii dafnenses*.

<sup>2</sup> Sorin Marcel Colesniuc, *Cercetări arheologice, prospecțiuni geofizice și investigații biologice la Sucidava*, in Sorin Marcel Colesniuc (Găbr el Mircea Talmazchi), Ștefan Dumitrașcu, Cristina Talmazchi, Mariana Cojoc, Costin Seurtu, *Constanța - Istorie, Vecinătate, Multiculturalitate*, Editura MEGA, Cluj-Napoca, 2023, pp. 145-162.

Information on the city of Sucidava Moesia and on the incidental discoveries in the city area has appeared in various volumes and specialty scientific magazines.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the precinct wall of the fortification has a rectangular shape and is surrounded by a moat. The eastern and western sides had a length of approximately 80 m, and the northern side was preserved on a length of 160 m (1.28 ha).

In 1935 portions from the walls of the city could still be seen, with a thickness of over 2 m, the defence wall with a width of around 4 m, and the moat. In 1975, no wall was visible any more due to the inhabitants of Satu Nou (found nearby), that had taken the stone to reuse it in buildings and due to the forest planted in the city area.

The military settlement was surrounded by a moat on three sides and on the northern side is bordered by the Danube. The gate of the Roman city was on the south-eastern side. Beside the gate there have been identified two roads: one runs towards the south-west, towards the city of Păcuru lui Soare, and the second road is oriented towards the south-east, towards the city of Alinum. The city had, it seems, a defence tower on each corner and on the side facing the Danube. Some of the aqueduct that brought water to the city is still preserved today.

The city was built in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD and, after the Roman withdrawal (271-274-275) Sucidava became a powerful customs centre. The city had a flourishing evolution starting from the 4<sup>th</sup> century, but especially in the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries. Proof of this is the large number of lead seals discovered in the area, which reveals the intensity of commerce practiced by the population on the left banks of the Danube.

The surface research at Sucidava, outside the city walls, has also led to the discovery of a large basilica (25.50x11.35 m) dated to the 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries.

<sup>3</sup> A. Aricescu, *Armata în Dobrogea romană*, București, 1977, p. 123, 166. N. Conovici, *Contribuții numismatice privind legăturile Histriei cu getii de la Dunăre în sec. VI-II î.e.n.*, in SCIV A, 30, 1979, 1, pp. 87-93. V. Culică, *Croix romano-byzantine decouvertes à Pârjoasa*, in Dacia X, 1965 N. S. p. 425. Idem, *O descoperire a de arheologie la Dunărea de Jos*, in SC IV A, 1967, 4, p. 677. Idem, *Obiecte de caracter creștin din epoca romano-bizantină găsite la Pârjoasa Dobrogea*, in Pontica, 2, 1969, pp. 368-370. Idem, *Plumburi comerciale din etatea romano-bizantină de la Izvoarele (Dobrogea)*, Pontica, 8, 1975, pp. 25-262. Idem, in Pontica 9, 1976, pp. 115-133. Idem, in Pontica 12, 1979, pp. 145-149. P. Diaconu, N. Angheliescu, *Urme vechi de locuire în colțul de sud-vest al Dobrogei*, in Revista Muzeelor, 5, 1968, pp. 348-351. P. Diaconu, *În căutarea Dafnei*, Pontica, 4, 1971, pp. 311-318. I. Munteanu, V. Oprea, *Persechete pe malul dobrogean al Dunării*, in Pontica 40, 2007, p. 509. P. Poșonu, *Utile antice de pe malul drept al Dunării până la gurile ei*, Natura, 24, 7, 1975, pp. 9-20. G. Iamatchi, *Unele considerații privind evoluția Sucidavei Moesice în sec. IV a Chr. - VI p Chr.*, in Analele Dobrogei. Istorie dobrogeană, Seria An IV nr. 1, 1998, pp. 25-3. R. Vălcupe, *Limba meridională a provinciei Scythia*, Pontica 5, 1972, pp. 205-221. M. Zahariade, *Moesia secunda, Scythia și Notitia Dignitatum*, București, 1988, p. 1, 7.

AD, with an east west orientation, with a semi-circular apse on the eastern side. The rather large size of the basilica and the large number of small crosses and cult objects that have been discovered contour the image of the existence of a strong Christian community in Sucidava, a prosperous city at that time, where, probably, there was also a diocese. The city of Sucidava was probably destroyed in the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD, following the invasion of the Avars in 587, when there were also destroyed the cities of Tropaeum Traianum and Durostorum.

Among the archaeological discoveries from Sucidava in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there are: sculptural representations, bronze statuettes, objects with a Christian character, Roman-Byzantine crosses, votive plaques, fragments from lead frames, many ceramic fragments, oil lamps, coins etc.

In spring 1984, approximately one km downstream from the Roman-Byzantine city of Sucidava, in the spit of the Danube shore, there was found, incidentally, a Roman-Byzantine thesaurus comprising 17 silver objects: a reliquary, a patera, a sieve, a large cup, a small, trilobed cup, six bowls, and six spoons.<sup>4</sup>

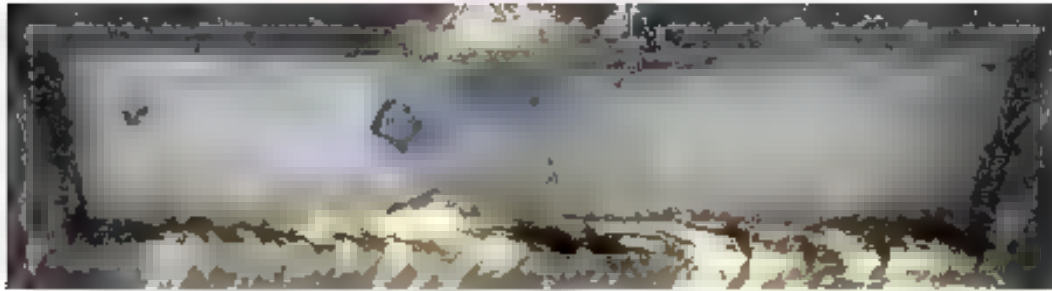


*Fig. 35, 36 – The beginning and the end of the first systematic archaeological campaign in the Roman-Byzantine city of Sucidava Moesica*

Therefore, in October 2024 we have traced a section parallel to the shore of the Danube with a size of 10x2 m, and we have divided the section in squares. The vegetal layer had a depth of 50-60 cm. In squares 1 and 2, the layer of black earth had a thickness of 30-40 cm, after which there came a layer of small stones in which there appear ceramic fragments and, finally, we have a layer of medium and large rocks. In squares 3, 4, and 5, the layer of black earth goes down to 150 cm, and in square 5, at a depth of 140-150 cm, there appears a layer of sterile yellow earth.

<sup>4</sup> Adrian Rădulescu, Traian Chiantă, *Tezaurul de la Sucidava-Izvoarele (Jud. Constanța, în Pontica 19, 1986, pp. 127-158.*

In this section we have discovered many ceramic fragments dated to the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries, iron holdfasts and lamellas, fragments from glass vessels, zoomorphic osteologic fragments, limestone and ceramic weights, four small bone combs and a decorated bone lamella, a fragment from an iron ring, three bronze combs, and others.



*Fig. 37 Section SI at the end of the 2024 archaeological campaign*

In conclusion, after 15 centuries of history, during which the natural phenomena and anthropic interventions have led to the covering of this military fortification, we have commenced the first systematic archaeological research, the purpose of which was to reveal the ancient architecture and artifacts and to promote the history of this Roman-Byzantine city on the right banks of the Danube. The archaeological materials that were discovered are, presently being worked on and will be presented in subsequent scientific sessions, after which they will be published in specialty scientific publications.

#### **THE SINGLE ANCIENT PAPYRUS DISCOVERED ON THE TERRITORY OF ROMANIA**

In 1959 there began the systematisation works of the city of Mangalia, which was reason for new rescue archaeological research to be made. The attempt to level the terrain in the area of the stadium and the open air theatre led to the reveal of a circle of stone blocks, with a diameter of around 14 m.<sup>6</sup> At the centre of the circle there was a rectangular pit, with a size of 3.90x2.25 m. Here there were discovered four Greek vessels: a kantharos, two small plates, and a patera.

At a depth of two meters, measured from the level of the stone circle, there appeared a tomb built from large limestone blocks, only finished on the

<sup>6</sup> Constantin Preda, Emilian Popescu, Petric Diaconu, *Săpăturile Arheologice de la Mangalia (Callatis)*, in *Materiale și Cercetări Arheologice*, VII, Editura Academiei Republicii Populare Române, București, 1962, pp. 445-448.



interior faces. The dimensions of the tomb are 2.05x0.85x0.72 m. with an east-west orientation same as all burial tombs in the Hellenistic necropolis. On the tombstone, made from three limestone slabs, there were found the remains of eggshells and a fragmented crown of bronze leaves, but also ceramic beads, fixed on a bone frame, all gilded.

In the interior of the tomb there was a male skeleton in a precarious state of conservation. On the skull there was found another crown, similar to the one on the tombstone, but also many wheat grains. There were also discovered textile traces from the clothing of the deceased and fragments of footwear.

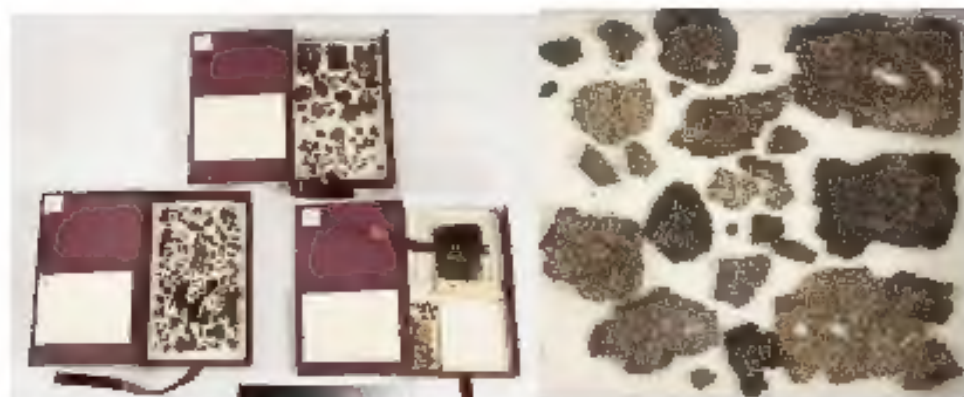
In his right hand and on the bones of the pelvis there have been discovered fragments from a papyrus written in Greek with dimensions of 0.30x0.05 m. Discovered on May 18, 1859, the papyrus was kept in the tomb, covered, until the day of May 30, when Mikhail A. Alexandrovsky arrived from Moscow, who made the first conservation operations. The papyrus was taken to the Institute of Archaeology in Bucharest, but because there were no conditions for restoration and conservation, the Presidium of the Academy of the PRR agreed that it would be taken to Moscow. On June 5, 1959, Prof. Radu Vulpe, representative of the Romanian side, handed over the papyrus to the Soviet side, represented by Mikhail A. Alexandrovsky, chief of department at the Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences in Moscow.

For half a century, in Romania, nothing was known about this papyrus. In the literature, but also in various magazines and newspapers, there appeared information on this papyrus having been destroyed. However, in Russia, articles were published in which it was mentioned that the papyrus was in a good conservation condition, but the location of the papyrus was not mentioned. This information determined Dr. Ion Paslaru, curator at the *Catolac* Museum of Archaeology in Mangalia, to request the support of the former directors of the museum and of the former mayor to seek this particularly important artifact, however, his search had remained fruitless.

In 2009, upon the anniversary of 50 years since the papyrus had been discovered, we have occupied the function of director of the *Catolac* Museum of Archaeology in Mangalia and, among the projects that we have propounded, one was also to find and bring back to the country this particularly important artifact for the history of Dobruja.

After more than two years of research, we have succeeded in finding this papyrus once more, at the *I. I. Grabar* Conservation Centre in Moscow and, at our requests for retrieval, Dr. Alexander Lesovoy, the director of the Conservation Centre, asked for the approval of the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation, which he received in June 2011. Furthermore, Dr. Alexander Lesovoy also convoked a scientific Council, with specialists and experts from the Russian Federation, to analyse the state in which the papyrus

was. The result was that it was in a perfect state, the same as in 1961, when Mikhail A. Alexandrovsky had finalised its conservation.



*Fig. 38, 39 – Fragments from the papyrus in Mangalia*

The official handing over of the papyrus took place on August 22, 2011, at the *Callatis* Museum of Archaeology in Mangalia.<sup>16</sup> It was handed over by Dr Alexander Lesovoy, director of the *I.E. Grabar* Conservation Centre in Moscow and received by Dr Sorin Marcel Colesniuc, director of the *Callatis* Museum of Archaeology in Mangalia. There were present: the ambassador of the Russian Federation in Bucharest, Alexandr Ciurilin, vice-consul of the Russian Federation in Constanța, Vitaly German, the mayor of Mangalia, Mihai Claudiu Tusac, Prof Dr Alexandru Avram, Dr Gheorghe Papuc, Dr Livia Buzoianu, Dr Gabriel Talmatchi from the Museum of National History and Archaeology in Constanța, professors and students from the Regional State University of Moscow, specialists in ancient history and archaeology from the universities and museums in the country, people of culture, with a passion for history, many representatives of the press, from Constanța and national.

<sup>16</sup> Sorin Marcel Colesniuc, *Istoria singurului papyrus descoperit în România*, Editura Callas Print, Mangalia, 2013.



*Fig. 40 – Ion Pâslaru, Vitaly German, Mihai Claudiu Tusac, Alexandr Ciurilin, Alexander Lesovoy, Sorin Marcel Colesniuc*

We mentioned, at that date, that modern research methods are necessary to decipher at least several words from the fragments of ancient papyrus found in 1959 in Mangalia and recovered, 52 years later, from Moscow. In the following months, we have delivered several communications at national and international scientific sessions<sup>17</sup> and we have published information on the

<sup>17</sup> Sorin Marcel Colesniuc, *Istoria descoperirii și readucerii în țară, după jumătate de secol, a singurului papirus descoperit în România*, report delivered on October 7, 2011, at the International Scientific Session *PONTICA 2011*, on the occasion of the documentation visit organised at the *Callatis* Museum of Archaeology in Mangalia; Idem, *Recuperarea, de la Moscova a singurului papirus descoperit în România*, report delivered at Târgu Mureș, on May 24, 2012, at the National Session of Archaeological Reports, 46th edition; Avram Alexandru, Pâslaru Ion, Colesniuc Sorin Marcel, Mihai Ionescu, *Remarques préliminaires sur le papirus de Callatis*, report delivered at the International Colloquium *MÉGARIKA. Nouvelles recherches sur les cités de la Mégaride et les fondations mégariennes du Pont-Euxin: Archéologie, Épigraphie, Histoire* which took place in Mangalia, in July 8–12, 2012; Sorin Marcel Colesniuc, *Singurul papirus antic descoperit în România – mărturie a relațiilor interculturale între Dobrogea și Balcani*, scientific report delivered at the International Symposium *Romania and the Balkans*, organised by Hyperion University, in May 12–13, 2014, in Bucharest; Idem, *Rolul unor oameni de cultură slavi în salvarea și păstrarea papirusului de la Mangalia*, report delivered on October 4, 2014, at the International Scientific Session on Slavic Studies, organised by the University in Bucharest and the Romanian Association of Slavic Studies, on the occasion of the Slavic Culture Days (*Zilele Culturii Slave*).

papyrus in specialty scientific magazines<sup>18</sup> and in the volume "The History of the Single Papyrus Discovered in Romania" (*Istoria singurului papyrus descoperit în România*).

The years have passed and in February 2018, after a contest, we have occupied the position of General Manager of the Museum of National History and Archaeology in Constanța. In September 2018, we were visited, at the Museum of National History and Archaeology in Constanța, by Dr Richard Janko, professor at the Department of Classical Studies – University of Michigan.

Prof Janko had heard of the Mangalia papyrus' existence in 2015, in Thessaloniki, while he was working on the Derveni papyrus. Therefore, Prof Janko came to Romania with a high power microscope, that took high resolution pictures in the spectre of visible light. However, the progress was minimal. The violet spectrum photography proved to be useless, because it highlighted the lacquer on the papyrus and not the surface on which the text was written.

Prof Janko left, profoundly discouraged, for the USA, however, with the volume *Istoria singurului papyrus descoperit în România* and with the photographs, in a digital format, taken by the Russian specialists with infrared and ultraviolet rays. Arriving in the USA, he carefully researched the photographs in infrared spectre that we had given to him in a digital format and he realised that it would be worth returning to Romania to test the digital microphotograph in infrared.

Thus, in December 2018, Prof Janko returned to Romania with a portable Q-Scope IR 940 microscope, that takes digital images at 940 nanometres and that is connected to a laptop through a USB port. The results were encouraging, even if the papyrus was in a precarious state. The ink could only be seen on approximately 14 of the 54 fragments. However, in the infrared spectre, it became clear that approximately one fifth of the fragments still have their letters preserved. Furthermore, the humidity made it so that the ink on the successive written layers ran through the material layer, so that one or several writing layers appeared correctly on the reverse, while various layers are seen in the mirrored image, on the left-hand page.

The conclusion reached by Prof Richard Janko is that there is no proof that the papyrus from Callatis was an administrative document. This was a continuous text, written on columns with vertical margins, aligned left, but of undetermined width. It had the shape of a literary papyrus roll, tall, about 24

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<sup>18</sup> Sorin Marcel Colesniuc, *Câteva informații despre papyrusul descoperit în necropola elenistică de la Mangalia*, in Ion Păslaru, Sorin Marcel Colesniuc, Todor Dimov, *Kallatida*, Editura Callas Print, Mangalia, 2014, pp. 319–342.



cm probably. The reading, even of few words, could allow a presumption regarding the contents of the scroll.

The words that were deciphered by Prof Janko are the next: "they have gone", "all", "riding", "name", "good", "of the sky", "summer", "homeland", "rock", "woody", "for" "hostile", "ugly", "unjust", "in green".<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, he deciphered the name Xerxes or Artaxerxes and he considers that the text could suggest an account of certain military events. Since kings named Xerxes or Artaxerxes had been leading the Persian Empire almost continuously from 486 until 336 AD, it is difficult to know what period of Persian history the papyrus refers to. However, there must not be excluded the possibility that the papyrus from Callatis is the copy of a contemporaneous historical work or that the deceased himself was the author of the text copied from a work yet unknown to us.

Therefore, in 2011 we have succeeded, with the aid of Dr Ion Pâslaru, to bring back to the country the single ancient papyrus discovered on the territory of Romania, a papyrus that all scientists in our country had considered definitively lost. This would not have been possible without our good collaboration with Dr Ion Pâslaru. In the current political context, the possibility of bringing back such an artifact is, most certainly, impossible. And I am convinced that in case, in the future, the political situation were to stabilize, there would be no one to search for and bring back this papyrus to the country. This is also the reason that we think that the recovery from Moscow, after 52 years, of the single ancient papyrus discovered on the territory of Romania, is our most important accomplishment in our professional sphere.

In conclusion, the archaeological research that we have made in various archaeological sites and ancient cities in the Constanța County, over a quarter of a century, have enriched the Dobrujan cultural heritage and, also, the national cultural heritage. The information on the monuments and archaeological materials that we have discovered we have presented in many national and international scientific sessions in which we have participated. Subsequently, all these archaeological discoveries we have published in volumes and specialty scientific magazines, some of which are in the footnotes of the present study.

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<sup>19</sup> Richard Janko, Sorin Marcel Colesniuc, Mihai Ionescu, Ion Pâslaru, *Excavating and Conserving Europe's Oldest Books: A Papyrus from Mangalia on the Black Sea (P. Callatis I)*, in *American Journal of Archaeology*, Volume 125, Number 1, January 2021, pp. 65–89.